

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended): A method for decontaminating the necks of thermoplastic preforms intended for making into containers by a before said preforms are blow molding molded or stretch-blow molding procedure molded for manufacturing containers, the method comprising:

feeding the passing said preforms one after the other into a container manufacturing unit; spraying through an upstream chamber through inside which the preforms pass with a decontaminating liquid is sprayed continuously towards necks of said preforms so as to maintain in this chamber wet inside and outside surfaces of the necks and in such that a manner a fog atmosphere of said decontaminating liquid so as to contact necks of the preforms; is maintained inside said chamber so that said necks are bathed in said fog of decontaminating liquid, and passing the said necks of said preforms in front of ultraviolet lamps arranged so as to completely irradiate the necks of the preforms wetted by the wetted by said decontaminating product for at least a minimum predetermined period of time, before reaching a device that loads them into a manufacturing unitliquid in front of ultraviolet lamps arranged so as to irradiate said necks for at least a minimum predetermined period of time.

2. (previously presented): The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the fog is kept flowing through the upstream chamber so as to facilitate its renewal.

3. (previously presented): The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the decontaminating product is hydrogen peroxide H₂O₂.

4. (currently amended): An installation for the decontamination preforms while they are moving one after the other to a loading device, the installation comprising:

a decontamination installation structurally and functionally connected to a preform feeder installation including a means for moving the preforms one after the other, said decontamination installation comprising ultraviolet lamps arranged so that the ultraviolet radiation completely irradiates necks of the moving preforms,

wherein said preforms are made of thermoplastic configured to produce containers by blow molding or stretch-blow molding,

wherein the decontamination installation also includes, upstream of the ultraviolet lamps, a chamber traversed by said preform movement means of the feeder installation and in which spray means are provided for spraying a decontaminating product continuously toward necks of said preforms so as to wet inside and outside surfaces of said necks and so as to maintain a fog of the decontaminating product inside said chamber.

5. (previously presented): The installation as claimed in claim 4, wherein the spray means comprise at least two spray nozzles arranged one on either side of the preform movement

means and above these, with their respective axes substantially aimed in the direction of the necks of the moving preforms.

6. (previously presented): The installation as claimed in claim 4, further comprising suction means connected to the chamber in order to create a flow through the chamber so as to prevent local accumulations of the decontaminating product in suspension.

7. (previously presented): The installation as claimed in claim 4, wherein inside the chamber, the preform movement means are surmounted, above the necks of the preforms, by a rod of a transverse dimension smaller than a diameter of the necks, this rod forming a member that prevents the preforms being lifted up but allows access by the fog of decontaminating product to an inside wall of the necks of the preforms.

8. (previously presented): The installation as claimed in claim 4, wherein the preform movement means comprise an inclined slideway down which the preforms slide by gravity one after the other and in that this slideway passes through the chamber.

9. (currently amended): A method for decontaminating the necks of thermoplastic preforms intended for making into containers by a before said preforms are blow moldingmolded or stretch-blow moldedmolding procedure for manufacturing containers, the method comprising: feeding the passing said preforms one after the other into a container manufacturing unit;

spraying through an upstream chamber through inside which the preforms pass with a decontaminating liquid is sprayed continuously toward necks of said preforms so as to maintain in this chamber wet inside and outside surfaces of the necks and in such a manner a fog atmosphere of said decontaminating liquid so as to contact necks of the preforms; is maintained inside said chamber so that the necks are bathed in said fog of decontaminating liquid; and

passing the said necks of said preforms in front of ultraviolet lamps arranged so as to completely irradiate the necks of the preforms wetted by the wetted by said decontaminating product for at least a minimum predetermined period of time, before reaching a device that leads them into a manufacturing unit liquid in front of ultraviolet lamps arranged so as to irradiate said necks for at least a minimum period of time.

10. (previously presented): The method as claimed in claim 9, wherein the fog is kept flowing through the upstream chamber so as to facilitate its renewal.

11. (previously presented): The method as claimed in claim 9 wherein the decontaminating product is hydrogen peroxide H₂O₂.

12. (currently amended): An installation for the decontamination preforms while they are moving one after the other to a loading device, the installation comprising:
a decontamination installation structurally and functionally connected to a preform feeder installation including a conveying device which moves the preforms one after the other, said

decontamination installation including ultraviolet lamps arranged so that the ultraviolet radiation completely irradiates necks of the moving preforms,

wherein said preforms are made of thermoplastic configured to produce containers by blow molding or stretch-blow molding,

wherein the decontamination installation also includes, upstream of the ultraviolet lamps, a chamber traversed by said preform conveying device a decontamination device for spraying a decontaminating product continuously toward necks of said preforms so as to wet inside and outside surfaces of the necks and so as to maintain a fog of the decontaminating product inside said chamber.

13. (previously presented): The installation as claimed in claim 12, wherein the decontamination device comprises at least two spray nozzles arranged one on either side of the conveying device and above these, with their respective axes substantially aimed in the direction of the necks of the moving preforms.

14. (previously presented): The installation as claimed in claim 12, further comprising a suction unit connected to the chamber in order to create a flow through the chamber so as to prevent local accumulations of the decontaminating product in suspension.

15. (previously presented): The installation as claimed in claim 12, wherein inside the chamber, the preform conveying device is surmounted, above the necks of the preforms, by a rod

of a transverse dimension smaller than a diameter of the necks, this rod forming a member that prevents the preforms being lifted up but allows access by the fog of decontaminating product to an inside wall of the necks of the preforms.

16. (previously presented): The installation as claimed in claim 12, wherein the preform conveying device comprises an inclined surface in which the preforms slide by gravity one after the other and this inclined surface passes through the chamber.